

The Spirit Of The Age.

Freedom of Inquiry, and the Power of the People.

BY C. G. EASTMAN.

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The Spirit Of The Age,

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THE MISTAKE.

In the long hour of night, when the wild winds were howling, And lightnings dashed, and the thunders were growling, A voice shrilly-piercing, was heard to bewail, Like the cry of an infant exposed to the gale; The tempest had rock'd lovely Eliza to rest, But the form of her lover still haunted her breast, And she dreamt that amid rural walks they were straying, While around them a sweet little infant was playing, When a tiger sprang forth from the brushwood among, The voice of whose roarings the echoes prolong: Then she thought that the cry of the child met her ear, And she awoke, ah! she awoke in a panic of fear, Still a voice-shrilly-piercing was heard to bewail, Like the cry of an infant exposed to the gale, She awoke! ah!—but no fancy was here— For the voice was still loud, and the cry was more clear, And determined it to—see the babe from the storm, She rose and encrusted in a mantle her head, And, as on her mind resolution deep sat, She rushed to the door, and she let in—the cat!

THE TOURNAMENT.—THE DAYS OF RICHARD COEUR DE LION.

I believe me that I never more longed to break a lance against any man, than I do against this boasting Frenchman.

He met the Baron with such prowess, that while the very plume on his cuirass seemed scarcely sturdier, And was thrown several paces from his steed—and it was not till some moments after his victory was rewarded by his spurs, that he recovered his senses."

RHENZI.

"Gallant bird!—never a better flight—the heron has it there," shouted the gay hawk-hunting party, as shading their eyes from the sun, they watched the noble falcon's flight through the sky.

"Your bird is a splendid one," said a tall and powerful knight, whom his servitors and the world called Lord de Thierry. He spoke with a strong French accent, as addressing a beautiful young maiden in the group, who might have seen some sixteen summers, he continued, "your bird is a splendid one, Lady Blanche,—may I ask whence he came, I have seen none finer—by our lady—even at the court of France!"

There might have been, for a moment, a bright red spot upon the cheek of the maiden, as she listened to this affectation of national superiority, by the haughty Frenchman; but her high breeding soon drove it away, and she answered coolly.

"It was the gift of my father's page, Henry de Stanley—you may have heard of his lineage—it is of the proudest in the land, though now, alas! sadly stripped of its own by the civil wars of these revolutionary times."

"What, the son of Walter de Stanley, whose estates were forfeited by Stephen, you heartless youngster?" and he glanced with contempt at a youth who sat near by upon his steed, apparently engaged in watching the heron's flight, but who, ever and anon, stole glances, half of suspicion, half of some warmer sentiment perchance, toward the Baron and Lady Blanche.

"Yes, it is he—but no heartless youngster," answered the maiden with some warmth, "for his arm, they say, is strong as that of many a renowned knight, and sooth to say, it will not be long before he will wear spurs himself," and then recollecting that she had perhaps spoken more warmly in the youth's favor, then would be fitting in the eyes of others, she checked herself, and added, "at least they say that Henry de Stanley is foremost in the joust, and fears nothing."

"Ha! sits the wind in that quarter," muttered the Frenchman, to himself, casting a keen glance for a moment at the maiden, a movement which brought the blood again into her cheeks—but no, it cannot be—the heiress of half a shire, in love with a handless page, the son of an exiled traitor, without more renown than my horse-boy!—by my father's faith it cannot be!"

Lady Blanche was the only child of one of the proudest and wealthiest of England's nobility during the reigns of Henry the Second, and his stalwart son, Richard the lion-hearted. The possessions of the Earl were almost as countless as his ancestry, for scarcely a midland county in the realm, that did not contain a manor or castle of the Baron Montrevier; and as he had declared his determination not to marry again—and it was known that most of his estates would descend to his daughter,

she could already boast, even at sixteen, of a numerous train of suitors, all eager for a smile, and jealous of a word spoken to another. As she was still young, her father said "no" to all—softening it, however, by a postponement for at least another year. Thus they were all in a state of suspense as to their ultimate fate—a suspense which they sought to alleviate by winning some sure token of her favor.

To all alike the Lady Blanche held the same demeanor. Gay, beautiful, an only child, and early deprived of a mother, she had learned to act and think for herself, with all the self-will in some instances, and the firmness in others of a full grown woman. She smiled, therefore, on all her suitors, and was even—for how could she have helped it?—somewhat of a coquette. But still Blanche was not as from any real heartlessness. One less pure, or less sensitive, would, in her situation, have been spoiled; but Blanche maintained her exquisite delicacy of sentiment amid every temptation, and if she smiled too often, as perhaps she did, when her heart did not second it, it was only because life had left her little else to do, and like a young flower in the sunshine, she could not but be gay.

But there was one whom Blanche regarded with different feelings than those with which she looked upon her crowd of suitors, and though she thought of him every hour of the day, while the others she would forget for weeks, and even months—she knew not exactly why it was so. Indeed such a question she had never asked herself. She was conscious that she did not look upon Henry de Stanley in the same light in which she looked upon the rest, but she neither enquired how long, nor what cause she had regarded him so differently.

Nor was she fully aware of her own feelings toward him. She had not yet learnt the lesson of her own heart. She could not analyze her feelings. She never even dreamed that Stanley was a suitor—oh! no, he was her father's page, and as they had been educated together, he was rather a brother to her. Such used indeed to be her feelings towards him, when she was still a child, and he was little more. But latterly there had grown up in her mind a strange sensitiveness to his attentions, such as sisters shew not toward their brothers—a shrinking timidity at his many acts of kindness and gallantry, which, indeed, on his part, were paid as modestly as they were received. She could not now bring herself to run out to meet him when he returned to the castle after a chase, as she was once wont, although her heart would flutter with a strange excitement, and her cheek would burn when he caught her in her own apartments. She was sensible, we say, of this change, but for a long time she enquired not the cause.

A fortnight before the opening of our tale, the whole castle had been thrown into commotion by the arrival of Lord de Thierry, a French nobleman of vast possessions, who had come over from the continent to visit some of the domains he held under the English crown, and whose renown, in feats of arms, was as extended as his lands were numerous. He had not seen Blanche more than a few minutes ere he became enslaved by her charms.

Nor could any one dream of becoming his rival—for who might stand before the lance, or win the mistress of the Lord Thierry? Yet, though he soon drove every competitor from the field, he failed to win the regard of Blanche. But fortune proved adverse; and he had now joined the hawking party in the vague hope of finding an opportunity to speak, if only for a few moments, alone to Blanche. And now, having introduced our characters to our readers, let us return to our opening scene.

The knight had scarcely spoken before the falcon made a swoop at the heron; but, instead of returning to the falconer, he shook his plumage proudly a moment, gazed a moment back at the man, and then soared away down the course of the river.

"Come, knights and gentlemen, ladies and all, let us ride after the truant and see if he will answer my call," said Blanche, and suiting the action to the word, she dashed forward on her palfrey, at a rate that soon left most of the train behind.

Two, however, maintained their pace, but a short distance in her rear. The one was the haughty Baron, the other was Stanley.

"Oh! my gallant steed," said the latter to himself as he urged on his horse, "stand me but in good service to-day, and I will value you a thousand fold more than ever. Only distance the grey of your insolent foreigner."

Meanwhile the arrival of the Frenchman had opened the eyes of Stanley to the true character of his own feelings.

Bred up from childhood with Blanche, he had learned to look upon her as a sister, and the happiest days of his life were, when wandering with her amid the fields, or in the old forest, he would weave wild-flowers in her hair, and help her to cross the brook, with none to watch their innocent sports. But that day had passed.

Blanche had seemed lately to have grown cold; and though she did not avoid him she never ran as of old to meet him. Her manner too was ever changing—now all frankness, and now all reserve.

Tortured by thousand fears, over which, however, hope in the end would prevail,

Stanley wondered and asked his own heart why it was that Blanche treated him so differently, but no answer came to his inquiry, until the arrival of the French baron, and his learned from the whispers of the servants and his fellow pages, that Blanche was to marry the foreign lord. Then it was the truth flashed upon him. He had never dreamed that Blanche would wed any of her former suitors, for she had ever laughed even at the probability of it; but now, when jealous of this new comer, he would have given worlds to learn that her sentiments were still unchanged—he found that Blanche appeared for the first time to avoid him. The distance between them, occasioned by their difference in rank, grew daily greater, until at length Blanche scarcely ever saw Stanley. Stung by what he thought her neglect, but which was in reality only the natural consequence of her exalted situation, Stanley now absented himself from all those places where he might behold Blanche, spending his time in the field, or at the chase. Yet night after night, when the whole castle was wrapped in sleep, and only the heavy tread of the sentinel at the gate broke the solemn silence, would Stanley, wrapping himself in the mantle then worn, watch until long after midnight.

It had been but the day before the hawking party, that Blanche and Stanley met accidentally. For a moment neither spoke. The contrast between such a meeting and their former ones, was chilling to the hearts of each; but as Stanley had now become fully aware of the hopelessness of his passion, he could not trust himself to speak, while Blanche, feeling half angry at the conduct of her playmate, was almost resolved to pass on in silence. She moved on therefore, but in so doing accidentally dropped a flower from a nose-gay she carried. Stanley sprang forward, picked it up, and presented it with a bow, not trusting himself to speak, except in a few, hurried words of gallantry. But, in so doing, his eyes met those of Blanche, and she saw in that look something that changed her opinion of passing on in silence.

"Blanche, oh! sweet Blanche, you are not dead, heaven be thanked—you will live—look up, dear one, it is your old playmate," and he pressed her hand. The action was faintly returned. Her lover could contain himself no longer, but pressing her new to his bosom, he murmured,

"Dear Blanche, why have we so long been separated from each other?"

[To be continued.]

IDLE WORDS.

BY MAJOR CALDER CAMPBELL.

The strongest love hath yet, at times,

A weakness in its power;

And latent sickness often sends

The madness of an hour!

To her I loved, in bitterness

I said a cruel thing;—

Ah me! how much of misery

From idle words may spring!

I loved her then—I love her still,—

But there was in my blood

A growing fever, that did give

Its frenzy to my mood;

I sneered, because another's sneers

Had power my heart to wring;—

Ah me! how much of misery

From idle words may spring!

And when, with tears of wonder, she

Looked up into my face,

I coldly turned away mine eyes,

Avoiding her gaze;

Iily I spoke of idle doubts,

And many an ill-fated thing;—

Ah me! how much of misery

From idle words may spring!

There were those of joy, wild, overpowering joy,

During the rest of that day Stanley, in vain,

sought an interview with Blanche. But fortune

proved adverse; and he had now joined the hawking

party in the vague hope of finding an opportunity

to speak, if only for a few moments, alone to

Blanche. And now, having introduced our charac-

ters to our readers, let us return to our opening

scene.

The knight had scarcely spoken before the falcon

made a swoop at the heron; but, instead of

returning to the falconer, he shook his plumage

proudly a moment, gazed a moment back at the

man, and then soared away down the course of

the river.

"The heart an idle word had lost,

But strove, that is, vain;

Oh! he who loves, beware lest thine

Across Love's path thy flings;

Ye little know what misery

From idle words may spring!

Month after month—year after year,

I strove to win again,

The heart an idle word had lost,

But strove, that is, vain;

Oh! he who loves, beware lest thine

Across Love's path thy flings;

Ye little know what misery

From idle words may spring!

There were those of joy, wild,

Powerful, and overjoying joy,

During the rest of that day Stanley, in vain,

sought an interview with Blanche. But fortune

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